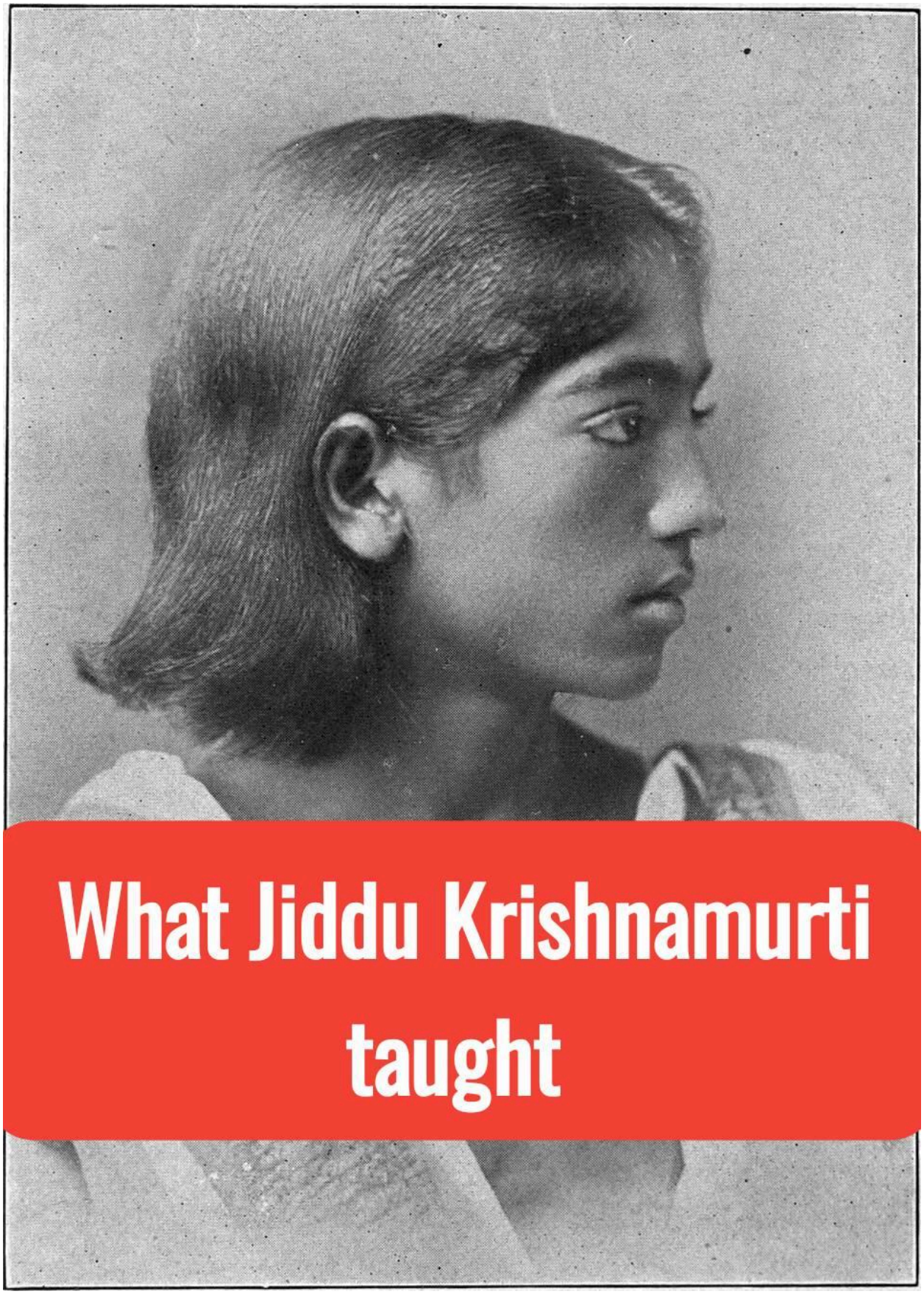

What Jiddu Krishnamurti taught

What Jiddu Krishnamurti taught?

Very short introduction

Adel Elsherif

Preface

This book is not written to add another layer of reverence to Jiddu Krishnamurti, but to strip away the myths and meet him as a thinker of rebellion. He was neither a guru nor a prophet, but a man who insisted that truth cannot be inherited, borrowed, or imposed.

His life—from his frail beginnings in South India to the global stage—was shaped by institutions that sought to mold him into a messiah. Yet, he refused the mantle, choosing instead to speak of freedom, inquiry, and the necessity of thinking for oneself. What follows is not a doctrine, but an invitation: to walk beside his questions and see where they lead.

This free book serves as a short introduction to Krishnamurti, briefly exploring his early life, the influences that shaped him, and his philosophy at the end of his life.

Part 1 :The Making of Krishnamurti

Jiddu Krishnamurti was born on May 12, 1895, at his home in Madanapalle, in the Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh, South India.

His family lived in a tiny, ill-ventilated, two-storied house in one of South India's most drought-prone regions. The narrow frontage opened onto a lane with an open drain.

As the eighth son, he was named Krishnamurti—a name evoking the god Krishna, the cowherd-god who was also the eighth child in his mythological lineage. Krishna is one of Hinduism's most revered deities and is considered the eighth avatar of Vishnu.

Krishnamurti was a frail child, plagued by recurring bouts of malaria. At one point, he suffered convulsions and was kept out of school for a year after bleeding from his nose and mouth.

He showed little interest in academics, preferring to spend long hours observing nature—clouds drifting overhead, bees at work, ants on their errands. His teachers misread his quiet introspection and detachment as mental deficiency, even labeling him "half-demented" at his Mylapore school.

Though born into a Brahmin family—traditionally high in social status—they were far from wealthy. His grandfather Ramakrishna held a respected position in the British East India Company's judicial department, but Krishnamurti's father, Jiddu Narayaniah, was only a minor civil servant.

Upon retiring in 1908, Narayaniah received a pension of just 125 rupees a month, which could not support his growing household of sons, sisters, and nephews. Desperate, he wrote to Annie Besant of the Theosophical Society seeking employment in Adyar.

Krishnamurti's mother, Sanjeevamma, was renowned for her charity. She regularly fed and clothed beggars who came from miles around, suggesting a spirit of generosity that belied the family's modest means.

After Sanjeevamma's death in 1905, Krishnamurti later recalled, "Matters were worse, for there was really nobody to look after us," signaling a further decline in their well-being.

In 1909, Charles Webster Leadbeater—a prominent and controversial Theosophist—encountered Krishnamurti and his brother Nitya. Dissatisfied with strict caste diets, Leadbeater gradually distanced them from their father's influence, ushering them into a world of Theosophical refinement and aristocratic grooming.

By 1921, after nine years abroad, Krishnamurti and Nitya made a brief, shy visit to their father, who was ill with diabetes. Narayaniah died in 1924.

The Theosophical Society and the Plan

Without the Theosophical Society, the world might never have heard of Krishnamurti. Founded in 1875, its three principal architects were:

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (H.P.B.), the movement's philosophical leader

Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, its organizational co-founder

William Quan Judge, its American representative

H.P.B. claimed contact with a hidden brotherhood of "Mahatmas," from whom she received the spiritual teachings that shaped Theosophy. Her 1877 book, "Isis Unveiled," articulated the Society's core principles, blending Western esotericism with Eastern mysticism.

The Society aimed to merge philosophy, telepathy, mysticism, and other so-called supernatural fields into a coherent synthesis. Its ultimate quest: to discover—or literally create—a World Teacher, not as a biblical messiah, but as a universal savior whose wisdom would uplift humanity.

World Teachers and Their Lineage

"Mysteries of the Heart Doctrine" (1902), compiled by Katherine Tingley and her pupils, lays out the Theosophical vision of perennial World Teachers:

At "definite periods in the world's life," enlightened Leaders appear to reaffirm eternal truths.

Historical examples include Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, and Lao-Tzu.

Helena Blavatsky prophesied that a future "torch-bearer of truth" would emerge if the Society remained faithful to its mission—an "Organization waiting for his arrival."

From the 1902 perspective, Tingley positioned herself as the current embodiment of that leadership, while also anticipating a "Greater One" who was "due," "now here and in action," destined to be found in America at the heart of The Universal Brotherhood.

The Theosophical Society was not a secretive group but a public organization. Katherine Tingley wrote: "Our society is more than just a spiritual body, it was a movement with a grand vision for humanity. At its core was the belief that at certain

pivotal moments in history, or at the ripened culmination of centuries, great Teachers and Leaders would emerge to present and uphold the one Eternal Truth."

The Importance of Children and Education

Katherine Tingley placed her greatest hope in the young: "Her greatest hopes lie in the children. In her view, anyone of any age can accomplish much, but with the children the possibilities are unlimited."

At her Raja Yoga School for Children in Point Loma, she pioneered "symbolic education," teaching:

Karma

Brotherhood

Compassion

Cyclic Law

Reincarnation

Her aim was to instill "the divinity of their own soul" and shape "free men and women, free intellectually, free morally, unprejudiced in all respects, and, above all things, unselfish."

Tingley famously declared: "Let me have a child from the time of its birth until it is seven years old, and all the temptation in the world will not move it."

Bridging Two Worlds

In this fertile Theosophical landscape, the frail boy from Madanapalle became the focus of global expectation. While his family struggled for survival, the Society marshaled its resources, rituals, and educational experiments to prepare Krishnamurti as the long-awaited World Teacher. His childhood—marked by illness, obscurity, and acute sensitivity to nature—was reframed as the first chapter in a cosmic drama.

Yet even as the Society orchestrated his rise, Krishnamurti's own explorations of truth and freedom would later transcend their designs. Understanding his early years alongside the Theosophical blueprint reveals the tension between prophecy and personal awakening—a tension that would define his life's work.

Education of Krishnamurti

Early Influences and Family Connections

In “Krishnamurti: A Biography,” Pupul Jayakar notes that Krishnamurti’s father, Jiddu Narayaniah, joined the Theosophical Society in 1882.

Krishnamurti’s first link to the Society came through his mother, Sanjeevamma, who died in 1905. She often spoke to her children about Mrs. Annie Besant, planting the seeds of Krishnamurti’s later path.

Annie Besant was a prolific writer and speaker who, after rejecting Christianity and embracing atheism, discovered in Theosophy the spiritual fulfillment she sought. She is thus sometimes called a “spiritual atheist” and ranks as the Society’s second most influential figure after H.P. Blavatsky.

From Financial Hardship to Theosophical Service

Upon retiring in 1908 on a modest pension, Narayaniah faced financial strain and wrote to Annie Besant requesting a position in the Society. He was soon employed as assistant secretary to the Esoteric Section at Adyar, India.

Meanwhile, young Krishnamurti struggled in school, uninterested in rote learning and labeled a poor scholar by his teachers.

Recognition by Charles Webster Leadbeater

While bathing on Adyar beach, the ex-Anglican clergyman Charles Webster Leadbeater—celebrated for his claimed clairvoyance—noticed Krishnamurti’s unique aura, free of selfishness. Leadbeater predicted the boy would surpass Annie Besant as a spiritual teacher and orator.

Discovery of the World Teacher

Leadbeater’s encounter occurred amid widespread Theosophical whispers about the coming World Teacher or Messiah. H.P. Blavatsky had explicitly stated the Society’s mission was to prepare humanity for this advent.

Leadbeater later explored Krishnamurti’s supposed past lives, documenting them in “The Lives of Alcyone.”

Theosophical Training Regimen

Krishnamurti and his brother Nitya were removed from their humble home and placed under Leadbeater’s care at the Society’s headquarters. Their rigorous training aimed to mold them into what Leadbeater termed “English gentlemen.the pinnacle of human refinement. Key elements included:

Practical Skills: Western bathing etiquette, wearing and caring for clothes, polishing shoes

Regimented Schedule: Strict timetables for meals, study, and recreation to cultivate punctuality and presence

Physical Endurance: Long bicycle rides—such as a 64-mile round trip to Chinglepet—to build stamina and self-reliance

Fear Elimination: Listening to ghost stories intended to desensitize them to fear

The Role of Annie Besant

After becoming Society president in 1907, Annie Besant formed a protective circle around Krishnamurti. A special group of boys was assigned to keep him company, and every aspect of his life was closely monitored.

His father was persuaded to cede guardianship over Krishnamurti and Nitya to Besant, ensuring Narayaniah could not interfere with their training.

Esoteric Experiences and Early Writings

Krishnamurti later described a warm rapport with the Theosophical Englishmen and recounted astral-plane journeys with Leadbeater, where “Masters” imparted esoteric teachings and imagery.

On January 3, 1910, he detailed an initiation ceremony by Master Koot Hoomi in a letter to Mrs. Besant, describing encounters with various Masters, including the Lord Maitreya.

Around the same time, “At the Feet of the Master” was published under Krishnamurti’s name. The text claims to record teachings given to him by his Master—likely transmitted through Leadbeater—and was written from memory to prepare him for initiation. Although questions arose about authorship and his fluency in English, Krishnamurti himself never disavowed the work. Its early ideas often conflict with his later philosophy, offering a window into his evolving thought.

The Stark Contradiction

The stark contradiction lies in the belief in God’s plan and the following of spiritual masters—both of which Krishnamurti ultimately rejected later in life.

God’s Plan in “At the Feet of the Master”

The book “At the Feet of the Master” describes God’s plan and its connection to individuals and their actions.

God’s Plan as Evolution

Krishnamurti states that God has a plan, and that plan is evolution.

Those who truly understand this plan cannot help but work toward it, becoming one with it because of its glorious and beautiful nature.

This knowledge aligns individuals with God, empowering them to stand for good, resist evil, and work for evolution rather than selfishness.

Aligning with God’s Will and Providence

In this framework, there are only two kinds of people: those who know God’s plan and those who do not.

Those on God’s side understand their purpose and strive to fulfill it, while others act foolishly—inventing self-serving ways, unaware that:

“All are one, and that therefore only what the One wills can ever be really pleasant for any one.”

This implies a divine will that guides what is truly beneficial for all. Until individuals can distinguish between the real and the unreal, they have not aligned themselves with God’s side.

The book affirms that individuals possess a divine spark and can align their will with God’s: “For you are God, and you will only what God wills; but you must dig deep down into yourself to find the God within you, and listen to His voice, which is your voice.”

The wise understand that: “Only God is great, that all good work is done by God alone.”

Individuals, as “sparks of God’s own fire,” are capable of great things—because God, who is Almighty, is within them.

Manifesting God’s Love and Thought

Love is presented as the most essential qualification, compelling individuals to acquire all others.

This love is not a selfish desire for personal liberation, but rather: “A will to be one with God, not in order that you may escape from weariness and suffering, but in order that because of your deep love for Him you may act with Him and as He does.”

Since God is Love, those seeking unity with Him must be filled with perfect unselfishness and love.

Krishnamurti's Shift: From Devotion to Discernment

But the young Krishnamurti eventually separated God from the holy book, insisting on critical thinking.

He advised that individuals should not accept a thought simply because it is written in "some book which men think sacred."

This teaching emphasizes the importance of independent thought and reason.

Individuals are encouraged to:

Think for themselves and judge whether a matter is reasonable

Understand that the opinion of a thousand men is worthless if they know nothing about the subject—regardless of how long a belief has been held or whether it's found in a book considered sacred.

A Major Reason I Believe Krishnamurti Wrote This Book

One of the strongest reasons I'm convinced Krishnamurti authored "At the Feet of the Master" is its unwavering call for critical thinking and rejection of superstition—principles that defined his life's mission.

Distinguishing Truth from Falsehood

The book emphasizes the need to "distinguish between truth and falsehood" and to "be true all through, in thought and word and deed."

This means being honest not just in speech, but in thought and action as well.

Overcoming Superstition

Superstition is described as "one of the greatest evils in the world, one of the fetters from which you must utterly free yourself."

Krishnamurti critiques the "awful slaughter produced by the superstition that animals should be sacrificed" and other cruel practices rooted in superstition.

He urges individuals to ensure "no slightest trace of it remains in you"—a clear call for independent thought and moral clarity.

Evaluating Thoughts About Others

He warns against jumping to conclusions about others' intentions.

Mindful Communication

Krishnamurti stresses the importance of being “accurate and without exaggeration” in speech.

He cautions against gossip and urges people to “think well before speaking, lest you should fall into inaccuracy.”

Speech, he says, should be reserved for what is “true, kind and helpful.”

Discrimination in Learning

Even with access to knowledge, one must exercise discernment—carefully considering “what is worth learning” and focusing on knowledge that will “most help you to help others.”

The Rebellion against the Theosophical Society

J. Krishnamurti’s relationship with the Theosophical Society began with reverence and promise. He was their chosen “World Teacher,” the one they believed would fulfill the prophecy of a coming messiah. But that narrative unraveled into a profound rebellion—against external authority, organized belief, and spiritual dogma, including the very teachings of the Society that had once embraced him.

What a loss for the Society. They poured their money, resources, and faith into shaping Krishnamurti into a global spiritual figure. And then—he turned away. He rejected their teachings, their structure, their vision. To some, it felt like betrayal. But it was loyalty to something deeper: the critical mind. He shattered the dream of the messiah—not out of malice, but out of integrity.

The leaders of the Theosophical Society were stunned. Some saw it as a denial of all they had given him. Yet their feelings were tangled—shock, disappointment, but also love and respect. That complexity made the rupture even harder to process.

Charles Webster Leadbeater, the man who discovered Krishnamurti, would have felt heartbreak and fury. His hopes for the future had died with Krishnamurti’s rejection.

As Krishnamurti matured, skepticism took root. While in England, he “grew skeptical and took little interest in any esoteric activity,” even claiming to have walked through an appearance of Master K.H.—after which the Masters never appeared to him again.

Dissolution of the Order of the Star

In 1927, at the Star Camp in Ommen, Krishnamurti's rejection of authority became unmistakable. He spoke of the need to be "free—free of my friends, my books, my associations," and to struggle for that freedom. He declared: "I and my Beloved are one. The vision is total. To me, that is liberation. The personality of J. Krishnamurti has been swallowed up in the flame."

He returned all the resources and relinquished his role as leader of the Order of the Star. The gesture was radical. He was done being a symbol.

He found his two years of training with Leadbeater "boring to tears." By 1922, he described being called an incarnation of a Deity as "rather a burden."

Rejection of Theosophical Teachings

The death of his brother Nitya in 1925 was a profound turning point in Krishnamurti's life. The two brothers were extremely close—emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. Nitya had been Krishnamurti's companion, confidant, and secretary during the early years of his rise within the Theosophical Society. Many believed Nitya would play a key role in Krishnamurti's spiritual mission as the "World Teacher."

He began openly contradicting orthodox Theosophical teachings. He rejected the rapid initiations and "Apostles" proclaimed by Besant and Leadbeater. He expressed deep skepticism about the proposed world religion and world university.

At the Ommen camp in 1926, his talks disturbed many Theosophists. One even claimed a "black magician" was speaking through him. Annie Besant, trying to reconcile the shift, spoke of a "blending of consciousness" between Krishnamurti and the Lord Maitreya—no longer a simple vehicle, but something else entirely. The prophecy had fractured.

Final Break and Independent Path

Krishnamurti formally resigned from the Theosophical Society in 1930. He stated: "My teaching is neither occult nor mystic, for I hold both as limitations placed on man in his search for Truth."

His final meeting with Besant was in 1932. He was saddened by her declining health. At that year's Theosophical convention, he refused to confirm or deny the existence of the Masters to the Society's elders.

After Besant's death in 1933, all formal contact between Krishnamurti and the Society ended. He referred to the Theosophical Society as an "organized belief" that promotes the "idea of a Master leading man to truth"—an idea he rejected entirely.

The Women in Krishnamurti's Life

Krishnamurti’s journey was shaped not only by his teachings and inner revelations but also by the presence of remarkable women—family members, seekers, intellectuals, and spiritual companions.

Their roles ranged from nurturing and support to deep philosophical engagement and emotional connection. Some believed in him as a messiah, others challenged him, and a few simply listened

Pupul Jayakar – The Chronicler and Confidante

Pupul Jayakar met Krishnamurti in January 1948, at age thirty-two. Though she had married Manmohan Jayakar in 1937 and was active in politics and social work, her encounter with Krishnamurti changed everything. His way of listening, his presence—it was unlike anything she had ever experienced.

In the late 1950s, Krishnamurti suggested she write a book about his life, based on the notes she had kept since their first meeting. She began the task in 1978. Her biography focuses on his life in India between 1947 and 1985, but also explores his early years and inner world.

Their dialogues—some recorded from 1972 onward—form the heart of her book. She recounted moments of healing, like when her mother spoke of grief after her father’s death, and Krishnamurti held her hand, radiating what she called “a stream of healing.”

Jayakar was driven, and Krishnamurti encouraged that drive, telling her never to let it fade. In the 1970s, she asked him about his intense physical experiences—was there a mutation in the brain cells? He replied, “Possibly that was so.”

When she asked to explore his “inner being,” he answered with a paradox: “It is nothing, absolutely nothing.” Trying to measure it, he said, would be like “measuring the immeasurable.”

On his ninetieth birthday in Ojai, 1985, she bent to touch his feet. He embraced her instead.

Radhika Jayakar – The Thoughtful Daughter

Radhika, Pupul’s only child, was born a year after her mother’s marriage. She married Hans Herzberger and pursued a Ph.D. at Bryn Mawr. In 1961, she visited Krishnamurti in Ojai. He later wrote to Nandini about their long conversation, emphasizing the importance of inner discovery.

Radhika was present during discussions where Krishnamurti encouraged a new way of seeing—“in the Japanese way,” bending the head and looking at the world upside down.

Sanjeevamma – The Mother

Krishnamurti was born to Sanjeevamma in the puja room of her home—an event considered sacred by traditional Hindus. Her presence marked the beginning of his life, though little is recorded about her influence beyond that.

Annie Besant – The Spiritual Architect

Annie Besant was a force—eloquent, organized, and deeply committed to social and spiritual reform. After being transformed by Blavatsky’s teachings, she turned from materialism to the occult. Arriving in India in 1893, she sensed the country’s spiritual genius and became deeply involved.

She saw Krishnamurti as a “great being,” the destined vehicle for the Bodhisattva Maitreya. Her belief may have been shaped by her contacts with Varanasi gurus.

Besant fought for custody of Krishnamurti and his brother Nitya, calling herself Krishna's "loving Mother" in letters. She bought the cottage in Ojai where they lived, renaming it Arya Vihara. She and Leadbeater were considered "Arhats," having passed the fourth initiation.

But Krishnamurti's rejection of initiations, Apostles, and the grand vision of a world religion shattered her. Her mental faculties declined, though her devotion to him as the World Teacher remained.

In 1927, she publicly declared:

"The Divine spirit has descended once more on a man—Krishnamurti. The World Teacher is here."

Despite her heartbreak, she closed the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society in 1928, saying no one else had the right to teach. Krishnamurti held deep love and respect for her, calling her "warmth and unselfish love" a constant in his early life.

Her death in 1933 marked the final severance between Krishnamurti and the Society.

Lady Emily Lutyens – The English Ally

Lady Emily Lutyens was Krishnamurti's only true friend in England. In 1924, she sat with him in his room, discussing his character and the appearance of the Lord Maitreya. Her presence was quiet but loyal.

G. Sharada – The Sister-in-Law

Sharada, Naraniah's daughter-in-law, prepared special meals for Krishnamurti and Nitya during visits to their father. She described Krishnamurti as "beyond description, very bright—full of light."

Rosalind Williams (Later Rajagopal) – The Guardian

Rosalind was a young American present during Krishnamurti's intense spiritual awakening in Ojai in August 1922, alongside Nitya. They sent reports of the experience to Annie Besant.

She married Rajagopal in 1927, and together they became sarvadhikaris—guardians of Krishnamurti's personal and professional life. But by 1950, they grew uneasy. Rosalind and Rajagopal questioned his "new friends" in India and noticed him becoming "increasingly passive and silent."

Rukmini Arundale

A South Indian Brahmin and the wife of George Arundale, Rukmini came from a prominent Theosophist family. She was a major cultural figure who founded the Kalakshetra Academy of Dance and Music in Madras, leaving a lasting legacy in Indian classical arts.

Indira Gandhi (Prime Minister of India)

Pupul Jayakar first met Indira Gandhi in 1931 and described her as "fragile, withdrawn, an austere young girl."

Indira later met Krishnamurti in the late 1950s. She was shy, and he delighted her with Zen anecdotes.

Krishnamurti read chapters about his meetings with Indira to her directly, and she suggested minor changes.

In October 1976, she attended a dinner at Pupul Jayakar's home in Delhi and confirmed that Krishnamurti was welcome to speak freely in India.

During one conversation, she confided that "the uneasiness that woke her at night had not yet gone away."

In November 1976, she lunched with Krishnamurti and the Dalai Lama—a rare convergence of spiritual and political leadership.

Nandini Mehta (Pupul's Sister)

Nandini was present at Pupul's first meeting with Krishnamurti in 1948.

She and Pupul also witnessed Krishnamurti's intense mystical experiences in Ooty during May–June of that year.

Afterward, Krishnamurti advised them to "go to Bombay and rest," acknowledging they had "gone through a great ordeal."

Nandini's personal life reached a crisis when she told her husband she wished to lead a celibate life, resulting in her children being taken away.

Krishnamurti urged her to "stand alone" and "throw yourself on life," but only if her decision came from deep self-knowing.

He was relentless in asking her to accept her new reality, yet showed "limitless" compassion for her children.

She became a close friend, traveling with him and maintaining contact through letters.

Shanta Rao

A renowned Bharatanatyam dancer, Shanta Rao attended Krishnamurti's talks in Madras in 1947.

She helped serve him and acted as a "doorkeeper" outside his room.

Her curiosity led her to question Krishnamurti on the nature of beauty—a theme that resonated deeply with both her art and his philosophy.

These women—some maternal, some intellectual, some spiritual—formed a constellation around Krishnamurti. They witnessed his evolution, challenged him, supported him, and sometimes suffered from the contradictions he embodied. But each, in her own way, left a mark on the man who refused to be defined.

Rumors, Reality, and Rosalind: The Intimate Side of Krishnamurti

Jiddu Krishnamurti never married, but his life was far from emotionally detached.

The most significant and controversial relationship he had was with Rosalind Williams, later known as Rosalind Rajagopal. She was married to D. Rajagopal, Krishnamurti's close friend and longtime business manager.

Their affair, kept secret for decades, reveals a deeply human side of a man who taught detachment, freedom, and the dissolution of the self.

The Relationship with Rosalind Williams

Krishnamurti's intimate relationship with Rosalind began in the 1930s and lasted for approximately 25 years. It was hidden from nearly everyone, including Rajagopal himself, who reportedly remained unaware of the full extent of the affair until much later.

The affair came to public attention in the late 1980s, when Mary Zimbalist, another close companion of Krishnamurti, confirmed its existence after reading about it in Lives in the Shadow with J. Krishnamurti, a memoir written by Radha Rajagopal Sloss, Rosalind's daughter.

The book revealed not only the affair but also the emotional fallout it caused—particularly for Rajagopal, whose personal and professional relationship with Krishnamurti eventually collapsed into bitter legal disputes.

Other Rumors and Relationships

Throughout Krishnamurti's life, there were whispers about his relationships with other women. Some were based on speculation, others on deep emotional bonds that, while not sexual, were profoundly intimate.

Annie Besant: According to biographer Mary Lutyens, there were rumors that Besant was sexually attracted to Krishnamurti.

However, there is no evidence that this was ever reciprocated or acted upon. Their relationship was more of a spiritual and maternal dynamic, layered with authority and expectation.

Mary Lutyens and Mary Zimbalist:

Both women were close companions and confidantes. They traveled with Krishnamurti, worked alongside him, and shared long periods of his life. While these relationships were not sexual, they were emotionally intense and central to his personal world.

These relationships—especially the one with Rosalind—reveal a complex side of Krishnamurti. He was not a detached sage floating above human experience. He lived through love, secrecy, betrayal, and emotional conflict. And yet, these very experiences were the crucible in which his teachings were forged. His life was not separate from his philosophy—it was the living embodiment of it.

Part 2 :From Life to Thought: Entering Krishnamurti's Philosophy.

After tracing Krishnamurti's biography, his break from the Theosophical Society, and the complex relationships that shaped his inner world, we arrive at the core of his legacy: the philosophy that challenged tradition, shattered dogma, and invited radical freedom.

His teachings were not born in isolation—they were forged in grief, contradiction, and rebellion. He did not offer a system. He offered a mirror,

The Philosophy of Jiddu Krishnamurti

"we are slaves to tradition, to custom, to organized religion, to our beliefs, and to the conditioned ways of our own thinking" – Krishnamurti

Krishnamurti was a radical philosopher. He didn't accept half-truths, and he wasn't interested in mere change—he demanded revolution. He wanted you to be an eagle, not a pigeon. He urged us to break free from the conditioning of social customs, traditions, beliefs, and even our own illusionary thoughts.

He called on us to become supermen and superwomen—capable of shattering every chain and living in true freedom. He was like De Sade, but without the radical hedonism and selfishness . Krishnamurti practiced mental transgression against all forms of authority for the sake of humanity.

He was direct. He didn't flatter me. He was unapologetic, yet bold enough to express what many people are afraid to even think.

Break Your Idols: Revolt Against Religion

Jiddu Krishnamurti saw organized religion not as a path to freedom but as a prison of the mind—conditioning that fractures humanity, stifles true inquiry, and obscures reality. He challenged us to shatter every idol, belief, and tradition that binds our thinking.

Conditioning and Slavery

Adhering to any creed—Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, or otherwise—means accepting cultural and environmental programming that narrows thought. As Krishnamurti declared:

"Your gurus, your swamis, your religious books make you a slave."

Here, slavery is the loss of freedom to see things as they are, rather than through a pre-installed lens

Division and Conflict

Every political or religious body “inevitably contains the seed of reaction.” Groups cling to power, resist genuine change, and breed hatred. To Krishnamurti, organized religion is no religion at all—it is superstition, dogma, and division masquerading as faith.

Distraction from Truth

Rituals—temple visits, church services, mantra chanting, animal sacrifices—serve as escapes from direct perception of reality. “Tradition is not truth,” he warned. The “make-believe world of symbols and images” only veils the immediacy of life.

Ambition and Authority

Religious devotion often masks a hunger for status, security, and control. Leaders and followers perpetuate authority structures that crush true freedom. Krishnamurti labeled religious leaders “confused,” trapped in their own conditioned minds.

The Truly Religious Mind

Most religious debates are superficial, he argued. A truly religious mind transcends institutions—it is an inner state of clarity and goodness, unafraid to confront the “bad mind” when it arises.

Religion and Human Problems

Turning to religious authority—or to the State—in moments of despair is a habitual but failed response. No system of belief has ever resolved the root causes of human suffering.

Mind-Darkening

“Religions, philosophies, theologies, speculations—even the latest drugs—can darken the mind,” Krishnamurti insisted. They rob us of innocence and freshness, leaving no space for genuine freedom.

Hindrance to Inquiry

Organized religion supplies “ready-made answers,” stifling inquiry. Its static, mechanical worldview prevents us from understanding life as a dynamic, unfolding process.

Propagation of Falsehood

Built on tradition, propaganda, and unexamined beliefs, religions often peddle comfortable falsehoods. Those illusions become barriers to authentic understanding.

External Authority

When we surrender to gurus, priests, or saviors, we abandon self-discovery. Reliance on any external authority kills the independence of thought.

Accumulation vs. Discovery

Religious practice encourages the accumulation of texts, rituals, and experiences. But true understanding arises not from amassed knowledge, but from fresh insight unburdened by past conditioning.

Fear, Security, and Superficiality

Fear, sorrow, and loneliness drive people into the arms of religion in search of security. Yet that very search deepens the “slavish mind,” stifling the capacity to discover truth, beauty, and depth.

Divisive Ideologies

Like political parties, religious “isms” enforce beliefs that separate rather than unite humanity. They erect barriers where genuine understanding demands openness.

Real Examples of Religious Division and Violence

History is filled with brutal reminders of what happens when belief becomes dogma and dogma becomes law.

Take the centuries-old conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims. What began as a political disagreement over succession after the Prophet Muhammad's death evolved into deep theological rifts. Today, this divide fuels sectarian violence in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen—mosques bombed, families displaced, and entire communities torn apart by inherited hatred.

Or consider the wars between Catholics and Protestants in Europe. The Thirty Years' War turned central Europe into a battlefield of faith, leaving millions dead over doctrinal disputes. Scientists like Galileo were silenced, and thinkers like Giordano Bruno were burned alive—not for crimes, but for challenging religious orthodoxy.

The Church in medieval Europe was not just a spiritual institution—it was a political force. It persecuted anyone who deviated from its interpretation of the Bible. Alleged witches were tortured and executed.

Heretics were hunted. The Inquisition became a machinery of fear. Bruno's belief in pantheism cost him his life. Even knowledge itself was suspect if it contradicted scripture.

And then there are jihadist extremists, who declare war not just on other religions, but on fellow Muslims, secular governments, and anyone who dares to think differently. Their violence is not rooted in faith, but in blind obedience to distorted interpretations.

One chilling example: an illiterate man attempted to assassinate Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz. When asked what he had read that led him to kill, he replied, "I cannot read or write. I just followed a fatwa."

These are not isolated incidents. They are symptoms of a deeper disease: the surrender of thought to authority, the replacement of inquiry with obedience, and the elevation of belief over truth.

For Krishnamurti, organized religion is the greatest barrier to freedom. It conditions the mind, creates division, fosters slavish dependence on authority, and prevents genuine inquiry. To discover truth, we must break every idol—every creed, every book, every ritual—and learn to see reality unfiltered, unprogrammed, and free.

Against Nationalism and Politics

Krishnamurti's Call for Inner Revolution

Krishnamurti held a deeply critical view of both politics and nationalism, seeing them not as tools for progress but as sources of division, conflict, and illusion. For him, true transformation—whether personal or societal—could only begin within. We must be human before we are anything else.

Krishnamurti's Stance on Nationalism

A Hindrance to Being Human

Krishnamurti believed that nationalism, like religious identity—Hindu, Muslim, Parsee—creates division and conflict. He stated unequivocally:

> "One has to cease to be Hindu or Muslim; one has to be a human being."

Conditioning of the Mind

He saw nationalism as a form of mental conditioning that blocks fresh perception. In a conversation with Ivan Illich, Krishnamurti remarked that nationalism "divides man," and even acknowledged that his own Brahminical roots were part of the conditioning that prevented true freedom and relationship.

Concerns for India's Spiritual Core

Between 1979 and 1985, Krishnamurti expressed concern that India's "pristine, original core"—defined by inquiry and doubt rather than blind faith—was being eroded by Western materialism, technology, and nationalism.

He asked whether the "Indian mind that produced the Upanishads, the Buddha" could survive being "smothered" by these forces.

Krishnamurti's Stance on Politics

Division and Conflict

Krishnamurti linked political and religious divisions directly to violence. After Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, he said:

"The real cause of Gandhiji's untimely death lies in you."

He blamed communalism and the spirit of division—through property, caste, ideology, religion, sects, and leaders.

He also dismissed non-violence as an ideal, calling it an "illusion," while violence remained the reality.

Focus on Individual Transformation

A central tenet of his teaching was:

"You are the world."

Krishnamurti believed that no political system could transform society unless the individual first transformed himself.

"Systems can never transform man; man always transforms the system."

He emphasized that all major shifts in human consciousness began with a single individual. The chaos of the world, he said, is a projection of the chaos within.

Reformers vs. Revolutionaries

Krishnamurti drew a sharp line between reformers and revolutionaries. He questioned whether Gandhi was truly a revolutionary, concluding:

"Gandhiji had the vision of the revolutionary, but caught up in politics, he had to compromise. His revolutionary sense was submerged, and he emerged a reformer."

To Krishnamurti, reformers deal with symptoms, while revolutionaries go to the root. He challenged spiritual leaders who focused on reform, stating:

"Reform is not going to lead to a deep revolution.

Skepticism Toward Organizations

Krishnamurti famously declared:

“Truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever—by any religion, by any sect.”

He believed truth could not be organized, nor should any institution claim to lead people toward it. He dissolved the Order of the Star, of which he was president, because he saw organizations as “crutches, weaknesses, bondages.”

Even social reform movements, he argued, condition the mind and do not bring true freedom.

Engagement with Political Figures

Jawaharlal Nehru

In their meetings, Nehru expressed anguish over the violence of partition. Krishnamurti insisted that transformation must begin at the individual level, and that action should arise from a silent mind, free of motive.

He felt Nehru’s “fine, sensitive mind” was “wasted in politics,” which he described as “deadly” and corrosive to the spirit.

Indira Gandhi

During the Emergency period, Indira Gandhi sought Krishnamurti’s advice. He foresaw her political downfall and warned of future violence.

He expressed concern that politics was destroying “something very fine within her.”

He asked whether she could “cease to be national,” to which she replied she could not—as Prime Minister.

Krishnamurti remained firm: he would speak freely, even under authoritarian rule, and refused to tailor his message for any government.

Achyut Patwardhan

A co-founder of the Socialist Party and freedom fighter, Patwardhan initially challenged Krishnamurti’s rejection of authority, arguing that India’s freedom was paramount.

But disillusioned by post-independence politics and its “petty urges to power,” he turned to Krishnamurti for guidance.

Krishnamurti advised him against choices driven by anxiety, saying that deep change must begin “at the center.” Without inner transformation, all social work is “useless.” Patwardhan eventually left politics.

Vinoba Bhave

Krishnamurti engaged Bhave, a Gandhian reformer, on the nature of freedom. He questioned Bhave’s emphasis on reform, distinguishing it from religion as the “source of life.”

He challenged Bhave to “deny the follower” and emphasized the need for a free mind—not one burdened by tradition or dependent on gurus.

The Cost of Ideology: When Politics and Nationalism Kill

History has shown us—again and again—that when politics and nationalism become sacred, innocent people pay the price.

Take the World Wars, where over 80 million lives were lost. Not for survival. Not for justice. But for ideology. For flags, borders, and the illusion of national pride. Young men were sent to die in trenches, cities were reduced to ash, and families were shattered—all because leaders clung to political visions rooted in hatred and domination.

And yet, decades later, the grandchildren of those soldiers now move freely across Europe, living in peace, studying abroad, marrying across cultures. The borders they died defending have softened. The ideologies they were told to kill for have faded. What remains is the haunting truth: they suffered and died for ideas that no longer matter.

Consider Mussolini’s Italy, where fascism turned citizens into tools of the state. Or Hitler’s Germany, where nationalism and racial purity became weapons of mass destruction. The Holocaust, the devastation of Europe, and the guilt that Germany still carries today—all born from political and nationalistic obsession.

Germany, in its remorse, opened its borders to refugees and migrants, even extremists—trying to atone for its past. But the irony is sharp: the very ideology that

once demanded purity now compels radical openness, sometimes at the cost of its own security.

These stories are not just historical facts. They are warnings. When identity becomes ideology, and ideology becomes law, humanity loses its soul. Krishnamurti saw this clearly. He urged us to be human first—not nationalists, not followers, not believers. Just human.

Krishnamurti consistently advocated for radical inner transformation—a “revolution at the core of human consciousness.” He believed this was the only path to resolving the deep problems of society, including those rooted in politics and nationalism.

External pursuits—political movements, social reforms, national pride—are superficial unless rooted in profound inner change.

We are human beings first. That is our true identity—not our nationality, not our religion.

Against God: Krishnamurti's Rejection of the Divine Illusion

Krishnamurti's teachings contained a profound and consistent stance against traditional, organized, and conceptualized notions of God, religious authority, and conventional spiritual paths. His approach was one of radical inquiry and negation, aimed at freeing the human mind from all forms of conditioning and illusion.

Rejection of Traditional God-Concepts and Labels

Krishnamurti explicitly stated, "God is a phrase," implying that the word itself—and the ideas it carries—are human constructs, not ultimate realities. He grouped "gods" with other second-, third-, or fourth-hand things people use to fill their lives, such as poems, politics, and music, suggesting they are not original or truly fulfilling.

He believed that man's gods are often projections of fear and contradiction: "His own fears and his loves are his own hates." This highlights the psychological origin of divine concepts.

He was candid about his personal stance, declaring:

"Unfortunately, I don't know what God is. I will probably never find out. And I am not interested in finding out."

When asked by Iranian princesses if he could foretell their future, he looked "quizzical" and replied that he was not an astrologer—rejecting the superstitious associations often projected onto spiritual figures.

Doubt as the Essence of Religious Inquiry

Krishnamurti strongly advocated for radical doubt as the foundation of genuine religious inquiry, contrasting it with faith-based traditions. He called doubt an "extraordinary purgation"—a cleansing of the mind from illusion.

He lamented that this capacity for doubt, once central to Indian spiritual life, was being eroded by Western influences that emphasized faith and materialism.

Writer Henry Miller observed that Krishnamurti “cultivated doubt (especially in moments of exaltation), and, by dint of heroic struggle and perseverance, freed himself of illusion and enchantment.”

Krishnamurti’s own “not knowing” regarding God exemplified this principle.

Denial of Gurus, Authority, and Organized Religion

A cornerstone of Krishnamurti’s teaching was the rejection of all external authority in spiritual matters. He famously dissolved the Order of the Star, proclaiming:

“Truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever—by any religion, by any sect.”

He viewed spiritual organizations as “crutches, a weakness, a bondage” that cripple the individual. He denied having disciples or apostles and refused the title of “guru,” stating:

“People use the guru as a crutch.”

He questioned spiritual hierarchies and refused to affirm or deny the existence of “Masters” when pressed by Theosophical elders.

“I deny everything that man has sought, to get this,”

he declared—including saints, monks, and Theosophists with their hierarchy of Masters.

Krishnamurti saw the reliance on gurus, saviors, and meditators as a symptom of inner emptiness in modern civilization.

Rejection of Rituals, Practices, and Sacred Texts

Krishnamurti dismissed traditional religious practices as ineffectual. He considered yogic austerities—fasting, prolonged silence—as “play, peripheral, and of no account,” despite having experimented with them himself.

He described meditation aimed at achieving a divine state as “mesmerism.”

He explicitly stated he had “no use for sacred books” like the Bhagavad Gita, calling for a “total negation of all anchors, crutches, and rituals.”

His early meditations, performed under Theosophical guidance, were done automatically and “meant nothing to me.”

Emphasis on Individual Transformation and Inner Reality

For Krishnamurti, genuine transformation was an internal process—not dependent on external ideals or figures. He believed that poverty and social issues could not be solved ideologically, but required fundamental change within the individual.

He linked the creation of temples and institutions to a lack of love, seeing them as substitutes for a deeper, inherent flame within.

“To go beyond the mind there must be a cessation of the self, the ‘me,’” he said—leading to a state where “that which we all worship, seek, comes into being.”

This suggests a sacredness that arises from a liberated internal state, not from an external deity.

Critique of Conditioning and Knowledge

Krishnamurti argued that both belief and non-belief in God are forms of conditioning. He proposed a “total negation of all that man had thought, said, or done,” including accumulated knowledge about God.

He asserted that the pursuit of “knowing God” traps the mind in its own conceptual framework, reducing God to a product of thought.

He sought a mind “completely empty of knowledge” to reach a state he called “the beginning of all things

“The Beginning Was Order; Man Made Chaos”

Krishnamurti directly challenged traditional creation myths, stating:

“The beginning was orderly. Man made chaos.”

He elaborated:

“The beginning must be ordered. And man called it chaos, and out of that man brought about tremendous disorder.”

This shifts responsibility for the world's suffering from divine design to human perception and action.

Krishnamurti's stance "against God" was not a simple act of atheism—it was a radical and comprehensive rejection of all human-created structures: conceptual, organizational, ritualistic, and authoritative. He believed these constructs prevented humanity from directly perceiving truth and achieving genuine freedom.

He championed a path of self-knowledge, profound doubt, and inner revolution—leading to a state of unconditioned awareness, beyond the reach of any predefined or worshiped deity.

You Are the World: Krishnamurti's Vision of Humanity

Krishnamurti's mission was rooted in compassion for humanity. He rejected religion, dogma, and nationalism—not out of rebellion, but because he saw them as obstacles to being truly human. His teachings call for a radical transformation of consciousness, beginning with the individual.

The Current Human Condition

Krishnamurti consistently highlighted the widespread suffering and disorder within humanity. He described the world as caught in an "appalling death of human integrity," where "terrible things are happening—threats of nuclear war, murder, torture, and all the unspeakable things. It is all becoming more and more insane."

Division and Conflict

Humanity is communal, yet divided—by property, caste, ideology, and religion.

"The world is caught in the corridor of opposites—hate and love, violence and nonviolence."

Krishnamurti insisted that divisions like Hindu, Muslim, Christian must be wiped out for humans to be truly human.

Self-Centeredness and Ego

The human mind is deeply conditioned—burdened by tradition, knowledge, and experience. The "I" or ego, rooted in self-interest, creates sorrow, loneliness, and psychological death.

"The 'me' is the continuity that makes humans mechanical," he said, and its movement of desire leads to suffering.

Fear and Insecurity

Fear is a destructive energy that withers the mind.

“It is part of our blood cells,” Krishnamurti said—an inheritance born of the brain’s demand for absolute security.

This search for security often leads to war, nationalism, and illusion.

Lack of Love and Compassion

Krishnamurti lamented that humanity often comes to life with “empty hearts,” unable to fill them with life’s abundance.

Love is frequently experienced with fear, frustration, or reduced to a “marketable thing.”

“Without love... the world is in such a mess.”

Superficiality and Imitation

Most people live as “second-hand human beings,” content with trivialities, conditioned by authority, and prone to imitation.

They look to gurus, masters, and saviors—losing initiative and creativity.

Technology and Materialism

While recognizing human ingenuity, Krishnamurti warned that advanced technology and materialism were creating “appalling emptiness,” ravaging the environment, and threatening to replace human faculties with machines

The Path to Transformation

Krishnamurti’s core teaching is simple and profound:

“You are the world.”

Social and political action alone cannot transform the world. Radical change must begin with the individual.

He illustrated this with the metaphor of the Ganga river:

“Its immense volume begins with a single drop.”

All major changes in humanity have been born from a single human being.

Ending the “Me” and the Past

The self-centered “me” must end. It is the source of conflict and suffering.

This requires the brain to become empty of accumulated knowledge and tradition—free from the matrix of memory.

Direct Perception and Listening

True change arises from “seeing what is,” without distortion.

This involves total perception, where the division between observer and observed dissolves.

It requires intense attention and listening, a mind that is still and free of conclusions.

The Emergence of the “New Mind”

This transformation leads to the birth of a “new mind”—fresh, eager, fertile, deeply enquiring, and empty like a womb before conception.

It functions wholly, without direction, free of psychological time and fear.

This new mind is inherently compassionate and creative.

Flowering of the Senses

Contrary to ascetic denial, Krishnamurti encouraged the senses to “flower fully and totally.”

When the senses operate without desire, there is a wholeness of sensory intelligence that dissolves the boundary between inner and outer, past and future.

Doubt as Religious Inquiry

Krishnamurti emphasized doubt as essential to religious inquiry.

In India, doubt once served to purge the mind of illusion. He questioned whether this capacity was being lost in the face of blind faith and materialism.

Love, Compassion, and Dignity

Love, he said, is a “dangerous thing”—because it brings the only revolution that gives complete happiness.

True love has no continuity, no object; it is a feeling free of thought.

“Compassion means passion for all. Love, Sir, does not suffer.”

Dignity is not found in titles or positions, but in self-understanding.

“Being nothing” is the beginning of true dignity.

The Crisis and the Future of Humanity

Krishnamurti felt an intense urgency about the crisis facing humanity. Without radical inner transformation, he warned, humanity’s essence—its perception and compassion—will vanish.

He foresaw two futures: one where humanity delves into its inner being and uses new tools wisely, and another where it succumbs to entertainment and loses its core.

The human brain, conditioned by millennia, needs a “tremendous revolution, a great mutation” to become a fresh mind and avert disaster.

“The potential for this transformation lies in listening with the whole weight and depth of the million years of man—and going beyond.”

“Order is the beginning—the source of an energy that can never diminish.”

The Illusion of Separation: The Observer Is the Observed

Krishnamurti's teachings delve deeply into the nature of the self and the observer, revealing their interconnectedness and the illusion of separation that underlies human suffering. His insights challenge the very structure of thought, identity, and perception—pointing toward a radical inner transformation as the only path to true freedom.

The Nature of the Self ("I" or Ego)

Krishnamurti often referred to the self as the "I" or ego entity, emphasizing its central role in creating and perpetuating human problems. He saw the self as a continuous stream of thought, memory, and accumulated knowledge—a psychological construct rather than a fixed reality.

Formation and Perpetuation

The self is essentially the "thinker," who separates himself from thought in order to protect and preserve his identity. This division leads to a constant production of changing thoughts, reinforcing the illusion of continuity.

Krishnamurti described the "I" as a product of psychological time—manifesting as thought that seeks to mold or control other thoughts. This continuity, he said, is mechanical and deeply conditioned.

Limitations and Suffering

The self, being a fragmented collection of experiences, desires, memories, and prejudices, is inherently limited. It is the source of conflict, pain, loneliness, and sorrow.

The desire to "become" something—better, more virtuous, more enlightened—is rooted in the self and its accumulated knowledge, leading to perpetual struggle and frustration.

Negation of the Self as Buddhism

Krishnamurti emphasized that true self-knowing involves understanding this process of "becoming" and ending it.

"The religious revolution is the end of becoming," he said.

He viewed the self not as a permanent entity but as a flowing stream. To end sorrow, one must understand and negate the "I" principle.

"Happy is the man who is nothing," he asserted—meaning freedom from the craving to "be something" and the realization that inner richness outweighs outer achievement.

The Observer and the Observed

A central tenet of Krishnamurti's teaching is that "the observer is the observed." This insight challenges the deep-rooted human tendency to perceive oneself as separate from one's thoughts, emotions, and experiences.

The Illusion of Separation

The observer is often seen as distinct from what it observes. This division—created through images, conclusions, and expectations—gives rise to concepts of space and time.

For example, when one is angry, the "seer" and the "thought" are not separate. This illusion of division is a fundamental cause of conflict and disorder.

Seeing Without the Observer

Krishnamurti urged listeners to ask:

"Can the observer look at 'what is' without the observer, who is the maker of time, space, distance?"

He emphasized that "observation without the center is the negative process"—meaning observation free from memory, conclusions, or past hurts.

When one observes without this center, the seeing becomes "as quiet as the mill pond."

The Observer as Creator of Disorder

Krishnamurti challenged the notion of observing disorder from an external stance:

"You are part of that disorder; otherwise you wouldn't know it. You, the observer, are the creator of that disorder."

Seeing this truth—without reference to pleasure or pain—can free the brain cells from their conditioning, leading to what he called a "new brain."

Total Seeing and Listening

This non-dual perception involves the full activation of all senses. Listening is not just with the ear, and seeing is not just with the eye.

Krishnamurti described this as "non-ear hearing" and "non-eye seeing"—a perception untouched by memory or past experience.

"There is no inward looking or listening. There is only looking and listening."

Thought Being Aware of Itself

Rather than "seeing thought," Krishnamurti suggested the possibility of "thought being aware of itself."

This state of awareness—where the mind is not trying to change "what is"—allows for insight and transformation.

Achieving Non-Duality and Freedom

The core of Krishnamurti's teaching lies in dissolving the separation between self and world, thinker and thought, observer and observed.

Instantaneous Insight and Transformation

True transformation is not gradual—it is immediate.

“The instant man saw himself in the mirror of a relationship,” he said, a transformation occurred.

This involves seeing “what is” directly and without distortion. Such seeing or listening, with immense attention and no reaction, can trigger deep changes in consciousness—even in the brain cells themselves.

Mind in Silence and Emptiness

For direct perception to occur, the mind must be extraordinarily quiet, empty, and receptive—like a tranquil pond without ripples.

In this state of “total nonthought,” duality ends and truth is revealed.

Denial and Negation

Krishnamurti emphasized the “negative approach”—denying all psychological thought that seeks to change “what is” into “what should be.”

“Through negation there is creation,” he said.

A mind empty of preconceived ideas or accumulated knowledge allows for genuine creativity and newness. This denial extends even to the concept of the guru, placing full responsibility on the seeker for self-discovery.

Chapter 8 :Evolution of Krishnamurti's Teaching

Many people find contradictions between his early books and his modern reach. It is an Evolution, all of us change with time, the people who do not change, they aren't thinking nor evolving.

Over the years, Krishnamurti's language evolved, but the essence of his teaching remained unchanged.

Early vs. Later Teachings

In the 1950s, he guided individuals through step-by-step observation of consciousness, focusing on the unity of thinker and thought.

By the 1960s, he emphasized the denial of the individual as separate from the stream of humanity, calling for a revolution in consciousness.

By the 1970s, his terminology became more precise, probing the illusion of separation and moving toward universals and holistic perception.

The Whole and Totality

While earlier talks focused on detailed exploration, his later teachings spoke of immediate, holistic perception:

"The present holds the totality of the past."

"Insight is instantaneous. Perception of totality is an instant perception."

This implies a transformation in the very brain cells themselves, where the "million years of man"—ancient memory—is wiped away to allow for a new, fresh mind.

Making the Idea Easier: Real-Life Examples of Non-Separation

To grasp Krishnamurti's radical insight—that the observer is the observed—we can look at moments of intense emotion or psychological reaction, where the illusion of separation naturally dissolves.

Anger and Passion: No Observer, No Observed

Krishnamurti offers a striking example:

“It is only when the mind observes itself as being conditioned that there is no observer. Can the mind observe itself as the observer? It is not a rare thing. When you are angry, passionate—in that state there is no observer, nor the observed as thought.”

In moments of raw emotion—anger, passion, jealousy—the usual division between the person experiencing the emotion (the observer) and the emotion itself (the observed) disappears. You are the anger.

There is no one outside it watching. The separation collapses

Jealousy: Watching Without Naming

Krishnamurti explains that if “jealousy arises” and you watch the reaction before naming it, there is “watching in which there is no opposite.”

This means observing without judgment, without labeling, without trying to change it.

He clarifies:

“The ‘seeing,’ ‘observing’ without the eye or the ear. The observation of the arising of that reaction is the non-hearing, is the hearing without the ear, the seeing without the eye.”

This implies that when perception is unmediated by thought or past conditioning, the observer (the self) and the observed (the emotion) are not distinct entities. There is only pure awareness

Disorder: You Are the Chaos

Another example comes from Krishnamurti’s discussion of disorder. He asks:

“Do you observe disorder as an outsider, or do you see that there is no observer at all?”

He continues:

“Do you see that you have a disorder?”

If you view disorder from the outside, you create more disorder—because the very act of separation breeds conflict.

“You are part of that disorder; you the observer are the creator of that disorder.”

This insight is transformative. It means that the moment you stop separating yourself from the problem, you begin to dissolve it—not through effort, but through understanding.

I used to think I was separate from my thoughts. That I could control them, shape them, fight them. But the more I tried, the more they fought back. Anger, fear, desire—they weren't visitors. They were me.

Reading Krishnamurti changed that. When he said "the observer is the observed," I realized I wasn't outside my experience. I was inside it. There was no distance between me and my sorrow, no gap between me and my craving. I was in a conflict.

Krishnamurti's profound exploration of the self and the observer points toward a radical internal revolution—an emptying of the mind from accumulated knowledge, memory, and the divisive structure of the "I."

This enables a state of total, non-dual awareness, where the observer is no longer separate from the observed, and true freedom and compassion can manifest.

Good and Evil as Mental Conceptions – A call to a New mind

Krishnamurti's teachings offer a profound and often challenging perspective on the ideas of good and evil, moving beyond conventional dualities and moral frameworks.

Good and Evil as Mental Constructs, Not Opposites

Krishnamurti directly states that “evil is not the opposite of good.” He clarifies that there is “no relationship between the two.”

This fundamentally challenges traditional dualistic thinking, where good and evil are seen as opposing forces. Instead, he suggests that concepts such as “ugly and beautiful,” “good and bad” are created by thought itself—and that the mind cannot free itself from these opposites through its own activity.

The Mind's Role in Creating Duality and Conflict

The human mind often operates by dividing, judging, comparing, and seeking security in ideals, which leads to conflict. For instance, creating an ideal of nonviolence separate from the fact of violence results in hypocrisy and disorder.

The constant battle between “what I am” and “what I should be” is described as a “web of sorrow.” This division between the observer and the observed is a major source of fragmentation.

The mind, conditioned by likes and dislikes, choices, judgments, and identifications, establishes the ego.

Transcending Duality Through Direct Perception of “What Is”

Freedom from the concepts of good and evil—and the suffering they entail—comes not from striving for an ideal good or fighting “evil,” but from perceiving “what is” directly and totally, without distortion, judgment, or motive.

This “seeing” is a non-fragmented perception.

When one can observe without reaction or without a “center” (such as memory or conclusions), that is a negative process leading to freedom.

The “Flowering” of Emotions and Facts

Krishnamurti emphasizes allowing everything—including seemingly negative emotions or “ugly” aspects—to “blossom” or “flower” completely, without suppression.

He explains that if jealousy, for example, is allowed to flower, it reveals its true nature (envy, attachment), and in that complete revelation, it destroys itself—leading to real creation.

This applies to all aspects of “what is,” whether frustration, misery, sorrow, or stupidity.

The “New Mind” and the End of Psychological Continuity

A mind that can function wholly—free from the past, knowledge, and the conditioning of “becoming”—is a new mind.

This new mind is intrinsically religious and scientific, capable of responding totally to challenges without direction.

The ending of psychological continuity, which is the “me,” allows the brain to become “very young, fresh, innocent, alive, youthful,” free from psychological registration.

Psychological Suffering and Ignorance

Krishnamurti questions why human beings suffer psychologically, attributing it to ignorance, conflict, and contradiction—rather than accepting suffering as an inherent “human condition.”

The denial of love is seen as a deeply destructive tendency.

Krishnamurti’s teachings suggest that the human struggle with good and evil is largely self-created by a fragmented mind clinging to ideals and traditions. True liberation lies in a holistic, non-judgmental awareness of “what is,” leading to a state of being where

duality—including the concepts of good and evil—dissolves, and compassion and love can spontaneously arise.

Dying to Live: Krishnamurti on Death, Fear, and Renewal

Krishnamurti's teachings on death are not morbid—they are liberating. He explores the nature of death, its relationship to life and the self, and the possibility of understanding and moving beyond fear. For him, death is not the end—it is the beginning of freedom.

The Fear of Death

The fear of death is one of the deepest fears that disturbs our happiness and peace of mind. It haunts us not because of death itself, but because of what we imagine it to be—an end to awareness, identity, and continuity.

Even Epicurus, the ancient atomist philosopher, recognized this. He taught that fear of death destroys the tranquility of the mind. Since everything is made of atoms, he argued, death is simply the dispersal of those atoms.

"When we are, death is not. When death is, we are not."

He believed that life after death is no different than life before birth—non-awareness.

Fear of Living, Not Death

Krishnamurti takes this further. He suggests that what people truly fear is not death—but life itself.

"Sorrow is known, and death is merely the final sorrow."

We fear death because we have not learned how to live. We cling to continuity, possessions, and identity, and it is the ending of this continuity—not physical death—that terrifies us.

Death as the Ending of Continuity

Krishnamurti describes death as the total ending of the brain's activity—the cessation of thought, time, and the "me."

The self, which has acquired, accumulated, and sought importance, fears its own disappearance. Death threatens the illusion of permanence.

Life and Death as One Movement

He emphasizes that life and death are not separate—they are one movement.

"To live is to die to everything—to be reborn every day."

When we divide life into living and dying, we create the ache of death: separation, loneliness, isolation. But when we live fully, we die to the past, to attachment, to identity—and in that dying, we are free.

Ending of Attachment as the Beginning

Death is the complete ending of attachment. When breath stops, everything is left behind.

Krishnamurti teaches that only in this ending is there a true beginning. To die psychologically—to let go of the known—is to be reborn into clarity.

Freedom from the Known

"There is no death when the mind is free of the known."

Death is an original experience—a state beyond thought, beyond memory.

To understand death and sorrow requires a burning intensity, a willingness to face the fact directly.

"Knowing the nature, depth, beauty, and loneliness of sorrow is its ending."

Cessation of Will

True being, Krishnamurti says, is the cessation of will. The constant desire to "be" destroys the simplicity of just "being."

To die to desire is to awaken to life.

Learning to Die While Living

"Living, can one enter the house of death?"

Krishnamurti asks whether we can learn about death while we are alive—not through belief or knowledge, but through direct perception.

This learning happens in the present moment, not through accumulation but through awareness.

Transformation of the Brain Cells

He explores whether the brain—conditioned by millennia of experience and the search for security—can end its continuity.

When the brain cells are cleansed of ancient memory, they become innocent, alive, and youthful.

This renewal is not metaphorical—it is biological and existential.

Compassion and Suffering

In dialogue with Ivan Illich, Krishnamurti questioned why humans accept psychological suffering.

“Man’s acceptance of suffering is the essence of his ignorance.”

He declared:

“Love does not suffer.”

True compassion arises when suffering ends—not through escape, but through understanding.

Personal Encounters with Death and Sorrow

Krishnamurti’s own life was marked by profound encounters with death and sorrow. Yet he never sought comfort in belief. His core message is clear:

By deeply understanding the self, its attachments, and the nature of thought as continuity, one can transcend the fear of death.

This leads to a continuous state of dying to everything in the present moment—a state of creation, renewal, and freedom.

Fake Morality vs Real Morality

Morality, according to Krishnamurti, is not a superficial set of rules or social codes—it is a profound expression of an individual's inner clarity and freedom from fear. True morality arises not from obedience, tradition, or the pursuit of security, but from deep self-understanding and unconditioned awareness.

Hypocrisy in Moral Life

Krishnamurti directly addressed the concept of hypocrisy in many contexts:

Intimate Relationships:

He described the relationship between husband and wife as "the most intimate relationship and yet often the most callous and hypocritical."

Spiritual Followership:

When dissolving the Order of the Star, he questioned the presence of "false, hypocritical people following me, the embodiment of Truth." He saw hypocrisy in those who claimed to follow a spiritual path without genuine inner transformation.

Societal Morality:

He lashed out at "the hypocrisy of Indian society, its values and moralities," criticizing religious teachers and householders who upheld traditions that oppressed women and reinforced bondage rather than compassion.

Krishnamurti observed that a society obsessed with "duty and rights" was in decline. Outward adherence to moral codes, without inward freedom, was for him a sign of deterioration—not virtue.

Morality Rooted in Fear Is Not Morality

A central insight in Krishnamurti's teaching is that morality based on the desire for security is false.

“Those whose morality is based on security, security in every form, are not moral, for the desire for security is the outcome of fear. Fear and the constraint of fear, which we call morality, is really not moral at all.”

Genuine moral action, he argued, arises only when the mind is free from fear and conditioning—not when it conforms to societal expectations.

Freedom and Virtue

Krishnamurti distinguished between superficial freedom—the ability to act according to one’s desires—and true freedom, which comes from transcending both external and internal conditioning.

He linked virtue directly to self-understanding:

“The understanding of what you are—ugly, beautiful, wicked, evil—understanding without distortion is the beginning of virtue. Virtue alone gives freedom.”

He also challenged the idea that virtue could be cultivated through effort:

“Any attempt to become virtuous, any effort, is to deny virtue.”

Virtue, in his view, is not a goal to be achieved but a natural outcome of clear, unconditioned perception

Good and Evil

Krishnamurti noted that good and evil are ever-present forces. While goodness requires deep awareness and compassion, evil exploits vulnerability with ease.

“Evil is not the opposite of good. There is no relationship between the two.”

He believed that love—not morality rooted in fear—offers protection against evil

Ethical Action and Right Perception

Krishnamurti emphasized the urgency of ethical action in a chaotic world. He rejected idealistic projections that promise gradual shifts from sorrow to happiness or greed to

love. Instead, he called for a transformative change at the very “ground” of sorrow—a change in the nature and structure of consciousness itself.

“Right action is only possible when the mind is silent and there is a direct seeing of ‘what is,’ uninfluenced by motive, the past, or thought.”

Values and Inner Revolution

Krishnamurti observed a widespread decline in values, especially in India, marked by irresponsibility, overpopulation, and indifference toward humanity and the environment. He advocated for a revolution from sensate, conditioned values to those that arise from deep inner clarity.

Krishnamurti also warned that politics, with its emphasis on power and division, was detrimental to “the flowering of the mind.” For him, nurturing one’s inner being held far greater value than political engagement

Krishnamurti’s perspective on morality transcends conventional definitions. He emphasized that real morality is not imposed—it emerges from a mind free of fear, conditioning, and self-deception. This inner clarity gives rise to compassionate and “right” action, transforming both the individual and society from the inside out.

Nature of Fear and How to Overcome It

Fear is a feeling we all experience—fear of poverty, fear of death, fear of losing the people we love, fear of disease, and fear of loneliness.

In his book “ Freedom from the unknown”

Krishnamurti on Fear and Transformation

Jiddu Krishnamurti’s philosophy emphasizes that overcoming fear is not a matter of suppression or escape, but of profound internal transformation. He argues that fear must be understood at its roots—within thought, conditioning, and the authority structures that perpetuate it—before it can dissolve.

This approach demands clarity, honesty, and a rejection of both external dogma and internal illusions.

Understanding the Nature of Fear

Fear, according to Krishnamurti, is one of the most destructive forces in human life. It breeds confusion, conflict, violence, distortion, and aggression. People fear both living and dying, often because of concerns about security, public opinion, or loss. Yet the true problem lies not in external circumstances but in our unwillingness to face ourselves exactly as we are. Instead of confronting fear directly, we invent theories, hopes, and beliefs to escape it—ironically increasing its hold over us.

The Origins of Fear in Thought

Krishnamurti identifies thought as the primary source of fear. Thought projects into the future, moving from certainty to uncertainty, and creates anxiety about what might happen rather than what is. Because thought is the response of memory and past experience, it repeats the old and perpetuates fear. Even a word like “death” or the image associated with it can generate fear, though the fact of death itself is neutral. In this way, fear is not inherent in reality but constructed by the mind.

Conditioning and Comparison

Conditioning also plays a central role in sustaining fear. Comparison with others fragments the self, wastes energy, and contributes to misery. The demand for safety in relationships, for example, inevitably breeds sorrow and insecurity, because the very act

of seeking security invites instability. Fear thrives wherever the mind clings to patterns of thought, comparison, and conditioned responses.

Rejecting Authority

For Krishnamurti, liberation from fear requires rejecting both external and internal authorities. External authorities—religious institutions, social norms, political systems—often perpetuate fear to maintain control. Internal authorities—our own ideals, judgments, and self-imposed standards—do the same. True freedom arises only when one sees fear clearly, without the interference of authority, and allows it to dissolve through direct understanding.

Transformation Through Awareness

The transformation Krishnamurti envisions is not a technique or method but an act of awareness. To observe fear without judgment, without escape, and without reliance on authority is to let it unfold and end naturally. This demands radical honesty and attentiveness to the movement of thought. In such awareness, fear loses its power, and the individual discovers a state of clarity and freedom beyond the reach of

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Face Facts Directly and Immediate Seeing and Acting

Instead of running away from facts or seeking escapes, look at them directly and without evasion.

Recognize the danger of your conditioning immediately and emotionally—like seeing a precipice. In this state, seeing is acting.

By giving total attention to your conditioning, you can be freed from the past.

Live in the Present

Cultivate an instant perception of beauty and delight in the present, without seeking pleasure. This absence of pursuit removes fear.

Observe Fear Without Interference

Look at fear directly without escape, justification, condemnation, or suppression—and without using words or images that create the fears and understand Thought, Memory, and Time,

To be free from fear, understand the entire structure of thought, memory, and time—not just intellectually, but with your heart, mind, and whole being.

When thought understands its own nature, it ceases to generate fear.Do not divide fear into conscious and subconscious parts. See it as a single movement expressing itself in many ways.and cultivate Inward Solitude and Silence

Inward solitude means a mind clear of accumulated memories and uninfluenced by external stimuli.

Silence here is not the absence of noise, but a state where thought has understood its own beginning and there is no contradiction.

Psychological “Death” to the Known

To live fully, die psychologically every minute to cherished memories, pleasures, agonies, and bitterness.

This is freedom from the known—a renewal where thought, as memory, ceases to function psychologically. Meditation is an astonishingly alert mind that understands the totality of life and ends fragmentation.

It is complete attention where the observer is absent, the mind is emptied of the past, and thought and feeling are observed without condemnation.

A Personal Story About Fear

When I was five years old, my mother enrolled me in a kindergarten near the school where she worked as a teacher.

One day, my mother helped me with my homework because it was difficult for me, and she was in a hurry. The next day, when the teacher discovered that I had not done the homework myself, she ordered me to leave the classroom. She took me by the hand and stood with me in front of a closed door. She warned me that if I failed to do my homework again, she would put me in “the mice room.”

I cried and begged her not to put me there. From that day on, I was terrified of what might be inside. I even had nightmares of mice biting me.

One day, by accident, I walked past the door when it was open. I was afraid to look, but when I did, I saw it was just a normal room with old desks—no mice, no snakes.

When I remembered this story , I realized the mind can exaggerate fear through imagination.

According to Krishnamurti,overcoming fear requires a radical internal shift—away from dependence, comparison, and the limiting structures of thought and memory—towards a state of total awareness, freedom, and an innocent, unconditioned mind.

The Power of Now: Krishnamurti’s Vision of Present.

Krishnamurti’s Freedom from the Known and other works extensively explore concepts that align with living in and experiencing the present moment—freedom from the past and future—and the importance of immediate, direct awareness. These insights predate and resonate with ideas popularized by Eckhart Tolle.

Living in the Present and Immediate Action

Krishnamurti emphasizes that action is always immediate—it does not belong to the past or the future.

True living occurs in the present, free from the burden of memory or projection. For example:

“Living in the present is the instant perception of beauty and the great delight in it without seeking pleasure from it.”

He suggests that to die psychologically to the things we have cherished or found bitter is a form of purification—a rejuvenating movement. He writes:

“Freedom from the known is death, and then you are living.”

This points to liberation through detachment from what has been or what might be.

Observing What Is Actually Taking Place

A central theme in Krishnamurti’s teachings is the importance of observing what is actually happening—both inwardly and outwardly—without intellectual filters or philosophical frameworks.

This direct observation, seeing things as they are without interpretation or judgment, is essential for self-understanding and transformation. He states:

“To be able to look at this seems to me all that is needed, because if we know how to look, then the whole thing becomes very clear, and to look needs no philosophy, no teacher. Nobody needs to tell you how to look. You just look.”

Freedom from the Known and Conditioning

The title Freedom from the Known itself points to liberation from accumulated knowledge, experiences, and conditioning. Krishnamurti explains that our minds are often:

“Spoon-fed by our teachers, by our authorities, by our books, our saints,”

leading to a life that is “shallow and empty.”

We live second-hand lives, guided by inherited tendencies and external compulsions.

To be truly free, one must reject both outside authority and inward authority—both of which are built from past experiences and ideals. When this rejection occurs, the mind becomes:

“Fresh, always young, innocent, full of vigour and passion.”

Rejection of the “Traditional Approach” and Seeking

The traditional spiritual approach—moving from the periphery inward through time, practice, and renunciation—is described as making one:

“Narrow, petty, and shoddy.”

Instead, Krishnamurti suggests that the first thing to learn is not to seek. Seeking is likened to:

“Window-shopping,”

implying that true discovery arises not from external pursuit but from direct internal observation.

Time as Sorrow and Conflict

Krishnamurti states:

“Time is a movement which man has divided into past, present and future, and as long as he divides it he will always be in conflict.”

Thoughts like “Tomorrow I shall be happy” or “Tomorrow the world will be a beautiful place” are seen as continuations of desire sustained by thought—breeding sorrow and perpetuating psychological time.

To understand time, one must:

“Look at time only with that freshness and innocence of mind.”

He explains that the interval between the observer and the observed is time, and this division is born of fear.

Krishnamurti strongly advocates for a state of intense, immediate, and total awareness of “what is”—free from the interference of past knowledge, future desires, or external authority. This direct experience, unburdened by psychological time and conditioning, is presented as the path to freedom, clarity, and a “total revolution in the psyche.”

It is about observing life as a “total movement,” where there is no separation between the organism and the psyche.

Resources on Jiddu Krishnamurti

Krishnamurti’s legacy is not a system of thought, but a challenge. He asked us to look directly at fear, conditioning, and authority, and to see whether freedom is possible in the midst of daily life. His rebellion against Theosophy was not rejection for its own sake, but loyalty to truth as he saw it—truth without intermediaries. To read him is to be reminded that liberation is not found in following, but in questioning. May this work serve as a companion to that questioning, and as a reminder that the pathless land he spoke of begins wherever one dares to look

Primary Works

Freedom from the Known – A clear statement of his philosophy of freedom.

The First and Last Freedom – Essays on conditioning, authority, and truth.

Commentaries on Living – Reflections on daily life and perception.

At the Feet of the Master – Early text attributed to Krishnamurti, contrasting with his later independence.

Biographies and Accounts

Mary Lutyens' biographies – Intimate accounts from a close companion.

Pupul Jayakar's biography – Focuses on his Indian context and spiritual experiences.

Radha Rajagopal Sloss' Lives in the Shadow with J. Krishnamurti – Reveals his private life and controversies.

Multimedia Archives

Krishnamurti Foundation Trust – Digitized lectures, dialogues, and writings.

YouTube archives – Extensive recordings of his talks from the 1960s–80s.

Comparative Studies

Nietzsche and Krishnamurti – Both rejected dogma and emphasized freedom.

Theosophy and Krishnamurti – Situating his rebellion within esoteric history.

Krishnamurti and Buddhism – Parallels in non-attachment and direct perception.